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Evaluation

Annual report on evaluation in UNDP 2011

Summary

The annual report on evaluation for 2011 assesses the progress made by the UNDP Evaluation Office, programme and policy units at UNDP headquarters, UNDP country offices and the evaluation units of the associated funds and programmes in fulfilling the evaluation function outlined in the UNDP evaluation policy. The report also presents key findings and lessons learned from independent evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office in 2011. The Evaluation Office programme of work for 2012 and 2013 is provided in the final part of the report.

Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to: (a) take note of the report; (b) request UNDP to address the issues raised by independent evaluations; (c) request UNDP to strengthen capacity for and use of decentralized evaluation; (d) request UNDP to support national evaluation capacity development; and (e) approve the revised programme of work for 2012 proposed by the Evaluation Office and the proposed programme of work for 2013.

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I. Background

1. The annual report on evaluation for 2011 is the sixth report submitted by the Evaluation Office of UNDP to the Executive Board since the UNDP evaluation policy was approved in 2006 and the second since the approval of the revised evaluation policy in February 2011 (decision 2011/3). The report assesses progress made by the Evaluation Office and the evaluation units of the associated funds and programmes in fulfilling the evaluation function outlined in the UNDP evaluation policy. It also presents an assessment of the evaluation capacity in the organization, evaluative evidence available for managing development results, and compliance in decentralized evaluation. The lessons emerging from independent evaluations are discussed, and the programme of work for 2012 and 2013 is presented (see section III) for Executive Board approval.

II. The evaluation function

A. UNDP Evaluation Office

Coverage

2. The Evaluation Office conducts independent evaluations of corporate, global, regional and country programme outcomes identified in the UNDP strategic plan and approved by the Executive Board. During 2010-2011, the Evaluation Office conducted eleven assessments of development results (ADRs) in Costa Rica, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, India, Liberia, Moldova, Nepal, Pacific island countries, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka and the United Arab Emirates. This report also covers three ADRs that were initiated in 2010 but finalized in 2011 for Brazil, Thailand and Tunisia, and one ADR for Egypt, due for finalization in 2011 that was delayed until 2012 pending formation of a new government.

3. The Evaluation Office conducted four thematic evaluations during 2011 that will be finalized in 2012 and will be reported in future annual reports on evaluation.[1]

Support to building a culture of evaluation in UNDP

4. Following approval of the revised evaluation policy, the Evaluation Office, in partnership with the Operations Support Group and the Capacity Development Group of the Bureau for Development Policy, has amended the *UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results* (PME Handbook)[2] and the Programme and Operations Policy and Procedures (POPP) to incorporate expanded guidance on evaluation compliance and planning.

5. The Evaluation Office has issued a companion guide to the PME Handbook for programme units and evaluators on the subject of UNDP outcome-level evaluation.[3] The companion guide is available on the UNDP website in English, French and Spanish. It provides detailed information, tools and templates on how to design and conduct outcome-level evaluations and how to involve partners. It also sets standards for the quality of outcome-level evaluations that are now being used to assess and rate decentralized evaluations. The Evaluation Office is also leading the development of an e-learning course on evaluation, to be made available via the UNDP Learning Resources Centre. The course, which is currently undergoing online testing, is primarily targeted at programme managers in UNDP country offices and aims to deepen their understanding of evaluation principles and methodology and their application when managing UNDP programmes and projects. It complements the PME Handbook, providing an additional learning tool for UNDP managers.

[1] The four evaluations included the following: UNDP contribution to strengthening electoral systems and processes; UNDP partnership with global funds and philanthropic foundations; UNDP assistance to conflict-affected countries; and UNDP contribution to poverty reduction.

[2] See: PME Handbook

[3] See: UNDP Guidance on Outcome-level Evaluation

6. To help address the existing challenges in enhancing the quality and use of decentralized evaluations, as well as to improve the accountability of UNDP to the Executive Board, the Evaluation Office, in close collaboration with regional, policy and practice bureaux, has developed a *Quality Assessment Mechanism for Decentralized Evaluations*.[4] The tools and criteria contained therein draw on the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) *Norms for Evaluation in the United Nations System*,[5] the PME Handbook and its companion guide on outcome-level evaluation, as well as *Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects*.[6] These tools and criteria aim to enhance the quality standards of decentralized evaluations (for example, utility, clarity of objectives to all stakeholders, credibility, accuracy and reliability of evidence, transparency of judgements, and depth and clarity of reporting). The results of the quality assessment are presented in section D.

7. The Evaluation Office has established a new online evaluation expert roster with the regional bureaux and regional service centres, establishing a common platform that will consolidate various evaluation expert rosters and other parallel systems maintained by different programme units. The platform is based on standard criteria for vetting consultants and will provide UNDP staff with a single point of entry for accessing a wider pool of qualified consultants, facilitating cross-regional use of evaluation expertise. In 2011, the Evaluation Office knowledge network on evaluation, EvalNet, which has provided evaluation news and resources since 2001, was integrated with the new evaluation space on the UNDP Teamworks platform.

8. The Evaluation Office manages the publicly accessible online Evaluation Resource Centre (ERC).[7] The system includes evaluations conducted by the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV). As of 1 March 2012, the ERC repository contained more than 2,100 evaluation-related documents posted by programme units.

9. The ERC is a repository for all UNDP evaluations, including those that UNDP carries out in agreement with specific funders – for instance, UNDP-implemented projects funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). It is a requirement that all such evaluations be included in bureau and country office evaluation plans and posted in the ERC.

Resources

10. In 2011, the Evaluation Office received the same budget allocation as in 2010 from UNDP regular (core) funding for staff costs ($3.96 million) and evaluations ($3.78 million). Only $3.4 million, or 86 per cent, of the staff costs-related budget were disbursed, which was mainly a result of post vacancies during the second half of 2011. The total expenditure on evaluations and other corporate-related activities was $3.86 million, of which $3.3 million came from UNDP core funding and the remainder from other (non-core) sources: $383,000 from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation were allocated to evaluations, and $124,000 from the Government of Finland and $35,000 from the Government of Switzerland were allocated to the International Conference on National Evaluation Capacities.

11. The Evaluation Office continues to have 23 staff members (seventeen professional and six general service). Sixty-five per cent of all staff and 53 per cent of professional staff are women. The office faced a shortage of staff during the second half of 2011 following the departure of the Director, one evaluation specialist and one programme assistant.

Quality

12. The Evaluation Office continued to make efforts to further strengthen the quality of its evaluations and to improve quality assurance mechanisms. Further adjustments have been made to the ADR manual and ADR process guidance with a view to streamlining processes and improving efficiency. As a result,

[4] See Quality Assessment Mechanism for Decentralized Evaluations

[5] See: **Norms**: Norms for Evaluation in the United Nations System; **and Standards**: Standards for Evaluation on the United Nations System.

[6] See: UNDP-GEF Terminal Evaluation Guide

[7] See: Evaluation Resource Centre

there has been a significant improvement in the timeliness of ADRs. Following the standardization of the ADR approach in recent years, in 2012 the introduction of design flexibility has made it possible to adapt more easily to country-specific requirements and circumstances. With regard to quality assurance, the Evaluation Office has continued to contract at least one external advisor to review inception and draft ADR reports, in addition to assigning at least one internal Evaluation Office reviewer to each ADR. The Evaluation Office has significantly expanded its outreach to national stakeholders by establishing national reference groups for each ADR. These reference groups have provided rich guidance on the quality of the approach and deliverables and have contributed to strengthening the relevance of the evaluation.

Diversity of evaluation consultants

13. Support for national evaluation capacity in developing countries is a priority of the Evaluation Office. One mechanism being used to expand national engagement is to contract professionals from programme countries to support evaluations, either within their own country or beyond – regionally and internationally. In 2011, 59 per cent of consultants contracted to conduct ADRs or thematic evaluations were programme country nationals, as were 43 per cent of evaluation team leaders (six out of fourteen).[8] The India and Sri Lanka ADRs were conducted entirely by national consultants. The teams that undertook the ADRs for Costa Rica, Djibouti and Nepal each included three national consultants, as well as team members from other programme countries.

14. In 2011, 59 per cent of consultants contracted to conduct ADRs or thematic evaluations were male (compared with 68 per cent in 2010). Among consultants from programme countries, the ratio was 61 per cent male to 39 per cent female; whereas among consultants from non-programme countries the ratio was 56 per cent male to 44 per cent female. The percentage of female team leaders has increased from 23 per cent in 2010 to 36 per cent in 2011 (five of 14 team leaders were women). Table 1 provides an overview of the regional balance of consultants contracted to conduct ADRs or thematic evaluations in 2011.

[8] Consultants recruited in 2010 for evaluations whose findings are only now being reported in 2011 (Brazil, Egypt, Thailand and Tunisia) have not been included in these figures. They were included in the annual report on Evaluation 2010. It should also be noted that out of the 15 evaluations for which consultants were contracted one was led by Evaluation Office staff – only 14 team leaders were recruited.

Table 1: Evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office in 2011: consultants by region

	Africa		Arab States		Asia and the Pacific		Europe and Common wealth of Independent States		Latin America and the Caribbean		North America		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Thematic evaluations														
Team leader	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	3	1
Team specialists/ country case study	6	0	1	1	3	2	5	9	2	2	4	3	21	17
Assessments of development results														
Team leader	0	1	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	1	3	0	6	4
Team specialist	1	1	3	1	7	5	4	3	3	0	1	2	19	12
TOTAL	7	2	4	2	13	9	12	12	5	3	8	6	49	34

B. United Nations Evaluation Group

15. The Evaluation Office continued its strong support to UNEG, including through staffing the UNEG secretariat and serving in the UNEG steering and decision-making bureau. In his role as UNEG Executive Coordinator, the Deputy Director of the Evaluation Office continues as the guardian of the UNEG annual work plan and budget. The Executive Coordinator contributed substantively to inter-agency discussions pertaining to United Nations reform and evaluation, and represented UNEG at key international development evaluation meetings. Among others, he participated in the reference group for the review of the Independent System-Wide Evaluation commissioned by the Office of the Deputy Secretary-General and represented UNEG at the autumn 2011 meeting of the Evaluation Cooperation Group of the international financial institutions.

16. Evaluation Office staff made essential contributions to a number of UNEG task forces throughout the year, for instance in devising guidelines for United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) evaluation terms of reference and management responses, in disseminating the UNEG *Handbook on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation* and in peer-reviewing the *Guidance Note on National Evaluation Capacity Development*. At the 2011 Evaluation Practice Exchange Seminar, Evaluation Office colleagues acted as drivers in the sessions on Harmonization of the Evaluation Function and Evaluation Capacity Development. The Evaluation Office also participated in two professional peer reviews of the evaluation function of United Nations organizations, under the auspices of a joint task force established by the Network on Development Evaluation of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and UNEG. Finally, Evaluation Office staff were instrumental in strengthening the visibility and accountability of UNEG and, by extension, of the evaluation function across the United Nations system, providing advisory services to UNEG knowledge and financial management.

17. UNEG initiatives are integrated in the office programme of work and in the individual performance plans of staff members of the Evaluation Office.

C. Associated funds and programmes

United Nations Capital Development Fund

18. UNCDF continued to have an active evaluation function in 2011: approximately $650,000 was allocated from core and project budgets for a total of seven programme and project evaluations and one thematic portfolio review. Staffing in the UNCDF Evaluation Unit reverted to one professional post, supported by three junior professional officers and one United Nations Volunteer working as monitoring and evaluation officers, one at headquarters and one in each of the Bangkok, Dakar and Johannesburg regional offices.

19. Evaluation management was fully internalized in 2011 with the Evaluation Unit taking over responsibility for the Special Project Implementation Review Exercise previously managed by an external firm. In line with evaluation policy objectives to support decentralized evaluation, five evaluations were managed by regional offices with full support from the Evaluation Unit ensuring that evaluation procedures and reports met relevant United Nations standards. In line with the requirement in the policy of 'one strategic or thematic assessment per year', the Unit designed and managed a portfolio review of on-going projects in the area of inclusive finance.

20. In 2011 an external evaluation architecture review was completed, assessing the appropriateness and performance of the UNCDF evaluation function following changes to the policy. The review confirmed that systems are in place for the Evaluation Unit to discharge its role effectively and that UNCDF evaluations are considered to be impartial, independent and credible. The review highlighted weaknesses – common to other United Nations organizations – in programme evaluability and recommended that UNCDF should improve the linkages between evaluation and planning, monitoring and reporting systems throughout the programme cycle. In this regard, the Unit stepped up its support in 2011 to programme units, developing and applying an evaluability standard for all projects prior to being approved. It also developed a new results-focused performance-monitoring tool for use by programme colleagues based on standard evaluation principles. Four projects have been assessed to date using this tool.

United Nations Volunteers

21. The budget allocation of the UNV Evaluation Unit in 2011 amounted to $286,177, of which $222,496 were used for staffing costs and $63,681 for operational costs. Having been left without any staff in 2010, the Evaluation Unit now comprises one chief (P4, core-funded), one evaluation specialist (P3, funded through extra-budgetary resources) and a part-time administrative assistant (50 per cent, funded through extra-budgetary resources). The rebuilding of the UNV evaluation function remains a work in progress since the current level of staffing does not allow the unit to work at its full potential.

22. The Evaluation Unit has introduced a multi-year rolling evaluation work plan to replace the previous annual work plans, providing for more flexibility and adaptability, while fostering participation and corporate ownership. The Evaluation Unit has been working to catalogue, update and reorganize information currently on the shared drives, in view of migrating data to the new UNV portal. In its continuous effort to measure volunteer work, UNV produced the handbook *Assessing the Contribution of Volunteering to Development*, widely disseminated among the evaluation community.

23. In 2010-2011, UNV conducted, managed or reviewed 10 corporate-level, decentralized or joint evaluations, including strategic, thematic or project evaluations/reviews aimed at ensuring accountability, supporting decision-making and continuous programme improvement and knowledge sharing. The Evaluation Unit has also provided technical support to decentralized evaluations and is collaborating with the UNDP Evaluation Office to monitor the implementation of the management response for evaluations conducted since 2008. Overall, evidence indicates that UNV projects have succeeded in producing most of the desired results, demonstrating the potential of volunteering for civic participation and mobilization in addressing a wide range of community challenges. The joint evaluation of the collaboration between UNV and the United Nations Department of Field Support/United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations was completed and posted on the UNDP ERC.

24. The Evaluation Unit supported corporate training, planning and reporting processes and participated in a range of global level initiatives, meetings and workshops on the subject of evaluation, including UNEG. The Evaluation Unit has faced a number of challenges that include frequent turnover, weak capacity, slow responsiveness of field personnel and insufficient staff knowledge of the UNDP/UNEG evaluation-related policies and guidelines.

D. Programme units

Compliance

25. The revised UNDP evaluation policy, approved by the Executive Board, stipulates that all evaluations included in the evaluation plan are mandatory. Beginning in 2011, evaluation compliance of a country programme is measured at the end of the country programme period and based on the completion of all planned evaluations during the programme period. There were 41 country programmes completed in 2011, of which 21 (51 per cent) were compliant whereas two (5 per cent) were not compliant. The remaining 18 (44 per cent) were partially compliant (see table 2).

Table 2. Evaluation compliance

	RBA	RBAS	RBAP	RBEC	RBLAC	Total per cent compliance
Number of compliant country programmes (completed 90 to 100 per cent of all planned evaluations)	6	1	4	4	6	21 (51%)
Number of partially compliant country programmes (completed 40 to 89.99 per cent of all planned evaluations)	8	2	3	0	5	18 (44%)
Number of country programmes that were not compliant (completed 0 to 39.99 per cent of all planned evaluations)	0	2	0	0	0	2 (5%)

*Based on ERC data as of 24 May 2012. The rating is synchronized with that used by the UNDP Balanced Score Card. For the purpose of compliance reporting, evaluation reports that cover multiple outcomes are counted separately for each outcome that was to be covered based on the evaluation plan.

26. More than 90 per cent of evaluations completed in the Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and Caribbean regions received a management response in 2011 (see table 3). In the other regions, based on ERC reporting as of 24 May 2012, there was a decline in the percentage of evaluations receiving a management response.

Table 3. Evaluations with management response*

Region	Africa			Arab States			Asia and the Pacific			Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)			Latin America and Caribbean		
Year	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**
Evaluations completed	74	81	72	20	27	15	69	42	65	42	57	43	50	53	53
Evaluations with management response	72 (97 %)	76 (94%)	68 (93%)	20 (100%)	22 (81%)	12 (80%)	69 (100%)	41 (98%)	62 (95%)	42 (100%)	54 (95%)	34 (79%)	50 (100%)	53 (100%)	50 (94%)

*Data are based on ERC data as of 24 May 2012. For the purpose of management response reporting, evaluation reports that cover multiple outcomes are counted separately for each outcome that was to be covered based on the evaluation plan.

Coverage

27. In the 2011 reporting period, 100 country offices completed 248 evaluations: 66 outcome evaluations, 162 project evaluations and 20 other types of evaluations, including UNDAF evaluations (see table 4). Compared with 2010, there was a 34 per cent increase in the total number of evaluations conducted, most noticeably in the Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and Caribbean regions. There was also an increase in the number of countries that conducted at least one evaluation, with the Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean region displaying the most significant increase in the number of countries conducting evaluations (see annex).

Table 4. Regional distribution of evaluations*

Evaluations conducted in 2011	All regions	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Europe and the CIS	Latin America and the Caribbean
Number of countries	**139**	**46**	**18**	**24**	**25**	**26**
Total number of evaluation	**248****	72	15	65	43	53
Outcome evaluation	**66**	33	2	18	7	6
Project evaluation	**162**	34	10	45	35	38
UNDAF and other programmatic evaluations	**20**	5	3	2	1	9
Percentage of evaluations with management response	**226 (91%)**	68 (93%)	12 (80%)	62 (95%)	34 (79%)	50 (94%)
Percentage of countries conducting at least one evaluation	**100 (72%)**	29 (63%)	6 (33%)	20 (83%)	21 (80%)	24 (92%)

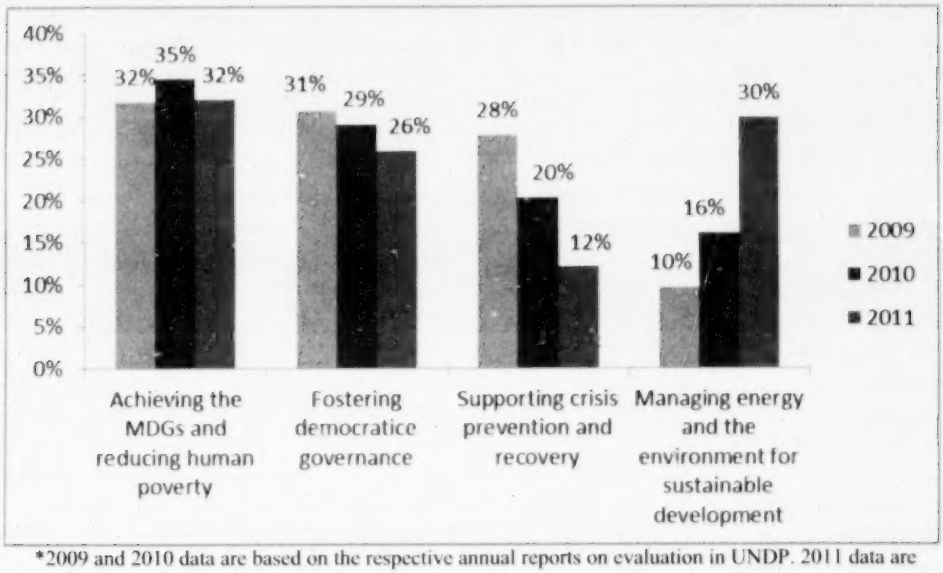
* The evaluations presented are based on ERC data as of 24 May 2012.

** Total number of evaluations completed by UNDP country offices that are present in ERC, including GEF, the MDG Acceleration Fund, UNDAF and other joint evaluations. For the purpose of compliance reporting, evaluation reports that cover multiple outcomes are counted separately for each outcome that was to be covered based on the evaluation plan.

28. The regional bureaux and the policy and practice bureaux are also required to conduct evaluations of their respective policies and programmes. During this reporting period, nine evaluations were conducted by the Bureau of Development Policy, Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS and Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean.

29. Of the three focus areas of 'achieving the MDGs and reducing human poverty', 'fostering democratic governance' and 'managing energy and environment for sustainable development', each accounted for around 30 per cent of all evaluations conducted (see figure 1). The relative increase in evaluations in the area of 'managing energy and environment' is mostly a reflection of the high number of GEF-funded projects that UNDP carried out over the last six years that are now concluding. Country offices are also making greater efforts to ensure that evaluations of GEF-funded projects are posted on the ERC in line with the UNDP evaluation policy.

Figure 1. Thematic distribution of evaluation (2009-2011)*



*2009 and 2010 data are based on the respective annual reports on evaluation in UNDP. 2011 data are based on the ERC data as of 24 May 2012.

Quality of decentralized evaluations (excluding projects co-funded by GEF)

30. Based on the *Quality Assessment Mechanism for Decentralized Evaluations* outlined in section I.A, the Evaluation Office conducted quality assessments of 135 decentralized evaluations undertaken in 2011 and posted on the ERC as of 31 March 2012. Several types of evaluations posted on ERC were not covered by this assessment. Quality assurance for completed GEF-financed projects supported by UNDP is described separately in the following section, as they are subject to slightly different review procedures, as per guidance from the GEF Evaluation Office, and because the review exercise is done in conformity with the GEF (World Bank) fiscal year starting 1 July. As of 2012, the Evaluation Office intends to use the same quality assessment tool for all evaluations, including evaluations of GEF-funded projects.

31. Other decentralized evaluations not covered include inter-agency joint evaluation reports (including UNDAF evaluations) and evaluations conducted by the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Achievement Fund. Evaluations that covered more than one outcome and that were posted multiple times on ERC for compliance purposes were only counted once for the purpose of this assessment (reducing the number of evaluations assessed from the 145 posted in ERC to 135). An overview of the total number of reports distributed across regions and by evaluation type is presented in table 5.

Table 5: Distribution of reports by region and evaluation type

	Regions and number of countries						
	2011, Global (139)	Africa (45)	Arab States (18)	Asia and the Pacific (25)	Europe and the CIS (26)	Latin America and the Caribbean (25)	Regional
Total number of evaluations	135	43	8	40	9	31	4
Project evaluations (outcome and output)	59	12	4	24	4	14	1
Outcome evaluations (programme and thematic)	76	31	4	16	5	17	3

Note: The number of evaluation reports quality assessed does not include duplicate postings

32. In line with the new companion guide on outcome-level evaluation, there is an increased tendency to pitch all evaluations at the outcome rather than output level. A large number of the evaluation reports assessed (116) had a national focus and largely concentrated on past performance (98). The evaluations were usually managed by UNDP, with the exception of 16 evaluations that were jointly managed with governments or donor agencies.

33. Each assessment uses a standardized system of weighted ratings covering seven quality-related parameters comprising terms of reference; evaluation subject, context and purpose; evaluation framework; findings; conclusions; recommendations; and lessons. The ratings are based on a six-point scale of highly satisfactory (a score of six) to highly unsatisfactory (a score of one). The annex provides a description of the rating system. The ratings are reflective of UNDP performance in designing and commissioning evaluations, including the selection and management of consultants.

34. The analysis of the overall weighted quality of the 135 reports shows that about 64 per cent of the reports were in the highly satisfactory to moderately satisfactory category. Of this a large number of evaluation reports were in the moderately satisfactory category (see table 6). About 36 per cent of the evaluations are either moderately unsatisfactory or unsatisfactory, with significant shortcomings across quality parameters. A large number of the evaluation reports (75 reports) were complete with respect to the report structure.

Table 6: Overall weighted quality assessment of the evaluation reports

	Global		Africa		Arab States		Asia and the Pacific		Europe and CIS		Latin America and the Caribbean	
Ratings	**No.**	**%**	**No.**	**%**	**No.**	**%**	**No.**	**%**	**No.**	**%**	**No.**	**%**
Highly satisfactory/ good	2	1.5	2	4.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Satisfactory	25	18.5	9	20.9	0	0	3	7.5	3	30	10	30.3
Moderately satisfactory	59	43.7	16	37.2	4	50	17	42.5	4	40	17	51.5
Moderately unsatisfactory	42	31.1	13	30.2	4	50	16	40	3	30	6	18.2
Unsatisfactory	7	5.2	3	7	0	0	4	10	0	0	0	0
Highly unsatisfactory	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	135	100	43	100	8	100	40	100	10	100	33	100

35. The quality-related parameters that received relatively high scores included terms of reference, definition of the evaluation subject, context and purpose. While the basic presentation of findings was often sound, there was significant room to strengthen the consistent use of evaluation criteria. Moreover, coverage of crosscutting principles, including human development, gender equality or capacity development, left much to be desired. By far the weakest parameter was the treatment of conclusions – the presentation of the implications of findings and the formulation of judgements. Recommendations, nonetheless, were presented in a relatively satisfactory manner. The annex includes a more detailed analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the decentralized evaluation reports and provides an orientation for programme units to further strengthen the quality of their evaluations.

Quality of decentralized evaluations of projects co-funded by GEF

36. For the 2010/2011 review period, UNDP completed and evaluated 63 projects in all regions, covering all GEF focal areas: biodiversity, climate change mitigation and adaptation, land degradation, chemicals and international waters. The review of these 63 terminal evaluations indicates a high degree of quality, with 81 per cent (51 out of 63) judged to be in the range of highly satisfactory to moderately satisfactory. Only one evaluation was deemed unsatisfactory in quality. This review is consistent with findings from recent years. For the 2009/2010 period, with a smaller cohort (30), the percentage of terminal evaluations considered moderately satisfactory or better was 83 per cent (25). Terminal evaluation assessments of project outcomes and project effectiveness consistently rate well, while weaknesses are most pronounced in the consideration of project financial aspects and the evidence for findings relating to efficiency and sustainability. During the past several years, voices have urged closer links between UNDP human development-related priorities and the global environmental benefits that are at the core of the GEF mandate. This linkage remains a work in progress. In this cohort, one third of project documents (22) and terminal evaluations (24) included a discussion on gender aspects. Sixty-eight per cent of the project documents (43) and 62 per cent of the terminal evaluations (39) provided a narrative on livelihoods and the economic consequences of the project for local residents. It is important to note that both GEF and UNDP guidance has been recently strengthened on these mainstreaming

issues. As mentioned above, the UNDP Evaluation Office has now issued new guidance on evaluating UNDP projects financed by GEF. In the future, the development of management responses to the terminal evaluations will need closer attention, as only 52 per cent (33) of the cohort included management responses. The uploading of UNDP/GEF terminal evaluations to the ERC will also require closer attention since half of the cohort (32) has not been uploaded. This uploading problem is most acute for global and regional UNDP/GEF project terminal evaluations

E. Evaluation capacity

37. Data at the country level gathered by the Evaluation Office for the annual report 2011 show that there has been a slight increase in the overall number of country offices with dedicated monitoring and evaluation units, reflecting an increase from 27 to 29 per cent. In many country offices, the monitoring and evaluation function is integrated into a larger unit, and staff members responsible for monitoring and evaluation often carry out other functions (see table 7).

Table 7. Decentralized evaluation support capacity in 2011

	UNDP Global	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Europe and CIS	Latin America and the Caribbean
Number of country offices	140	46	18	24	26	26
Country offices with monitoring and evaluation units	40 (29%)	21(46%)	5 (28%)	4 (17%)	0	10 (38%)
Country-level monitoring and evaluation specialists	54	22	9	11	0	12
Regional-level monitoring and evaluation specialists and advisers	8	3	1	3*	4*	1

* Staff time is not exclusively dedicated to monitoring and evaluation.

38. Evaluation capacity at the regional level has increased from last year. The Regional Bureau for Africa has a headquarters-based adviser and two advisers in Johannesburg and Dakar; the Regional Bureau for the Arab States has an adviser in Cairo; and the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean has an evaluation specialist in Panama. The Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific now has three staff members who cover monitoring and evaluation issues on a part-time basis – two in the Bangkok regional centre and one at headquarters. Three out of four of the staff members who now cover monitoring and evaluation issues of the Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States do so on a part-time basis – two are based in the Bratislava regional centre (one of whom has full-time monitoring responsibilities) and two are at headquarters.

39. In 2011, regular meetings were held of the Evaluation Family Force, a community of evaluation focal points, comprising regional policy and practice bureaux, evaluation specialists and advisers in regional bureaux, regional service centres, the Evaluation Office, and evaluation units of the UNDP associated funds and programmes. The group mainly discusses topics related to decentralized evaluation. Issues covered to date include preparation of evaluation plans, outcome-level evaluation guidance, quality assessment of decentralized evaluation, the evaluation expert roster, and management response practices. It is hoped that this exchange of ideas will improve evaluation culture and practice in UNDP.

Support to national evaluation capacity

40. Together with the Public Service Commission of South Africa, the Evaluation Office co-organized the second International Conference on National Evaluation Capacities, from 12 to 14 September 2011 in Johannesburg, South Africa. The event was attended by nearly 100 participants from more than 30 countries with different levels of development in national monitoring and evaluation systems. The

conference focused on sharing experiences on evaluation use for public policies and programmes. Participants identified lessons and constraints in implementing national monitoring and evaluation systems with an emphasis on evaluation use and on supply and demand for technical assistance in strengthening institutional capacity for national use of evaluation under the umbrella of South-South and triangular cooperation. Discussions covered systemic factors contributing to the use of evaluation, how monitoring facilitates evaluation use, taking evaluation into account in establishing evaluation systems, and opportunities for longer-term initiatives on national evaluation capacity. Proposed follow-up activities include initiating reflection processes in each country and exchanging experiences regionally using a UNDP Internet portal, which provides access to a range of resources. It is expected that the third conference in this series will take place in 2013.

III. Key findings and lessons learned from independent evaluations

41. This section summarizes the key findings and lessons learned from fifteen independent ADRs conducted or completed by the Evaluation Office in 2011.

A. Meeting national priorities and development challenges

42. Many evaluations conducted in 2011 indicated that UNDP was recognized as a valued, respected and key development partner supporting government. UNDP work remained relevant to national priorities and development challenges facing the programme countries and UNDP was often at the forefront of national strategy development. The countries examined included some in critical transition to normalization after years of conflict that had hampered development (Djibouti, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Moldova, Nepal, Papua New Guinea and Sri Lanka). Evaluations indicated that UNDP maintained its relevance often under difficult, complex and fluid circumstances by closely monitoring its operational environment, ensuring that the programme was in alignment with the country's underlying development strategy, and exploiting its political neutrality. In some countries, UNDP achieved relevance by targeting its programme particularly to poor and marginalized groups (Costa Rica, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand) and by addressing the critical challenges, including natural disasters such as tsunamis (Pacific island countries, Sri Lanka and Thailand) or the need to demobilize a large number of ex-combatants (Democratic Republic of the Congo). In some countries, Egypt for instance, UNDP established an influential public policy platform via country-level human development reports.

43. In other cases, evaluations called for more programme focus to maintain relevance in the country. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNDP was increasingly perceived as a service provider for managing large-scale multi-donor trust funds rather than as a catalyst for capacity building or providing substantive development leadership. The ADR pointed out that the country's strategy may have been driven by resource mobilization opportunities rather than consideration to areas where UNDP had comparative strengths. In India, where UNDP was one of many partners implementing poverty reduction projects, it was critical for UNDP to be more strategic and focus, for example, more on upstream work than on delivering multiple small projects on livelihoods, and making clear choices in project selection and resource allocation. In the United Arab Emirates, the need for strong commitment in supporting the northern emirates was needed in order to address its development priorities.

44. Some countries made significant progress in the MDGs (Djibouti and Egypt). While the pace of achieving the MDGs varied across countries, ADRs recognized the significant contribution that UNDP made in supporting countries to take steps towards achieving the MDGs. UNDP raised awareness to accelerate the national achievement of MDGs, particularly by supporting government to develop clearly defined targets and indicators, prepare a detailed costing plan and produce regularly issued MDG progress reports (Brazil, Costa Rica, Djibouti, Egypt, Moldova, and Papua New Guinea). Many ADRs also stressed the importance of integrating the MDGs into concrete, realistic national and sub-national development plans (Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Pacific island countries and Papua New Guinea) and encouraged UNDP to continue to support governments by emphasizing human development at the centre of its programme (Nepal and India) and by addressing its challenges such as lack of resources, low quality and reliability of national statistics, and limited dissemination of MDG reports and analyses (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Papua New Guinea and Tunisia). In some

middle-income countries, such as Tunisia, the government did not necessarily see the MDGs as relevant for the country, but results of MDG monitoring did highlight the existence of sub-national disparities. In Thailand where the MDGs were largely achieved at the national level, the ADR called for UNDP to pay more attention to disparities at the local level, systematically linking the national and sub-national planning processes in achieving the MDGs. In Costa Rica, the UNDP human development approach was successfully incorporated into the formulation of public policies and national development plans and, most recently, in the policy on citizen security and social peace, promoting the practice of democratic interaction among citizens. In Egypt, the five periodic MDG assessments that UNDP supported provided clear and public evidence of the uneven progress in poverty alleviation across the country, helping to spur government action.

B. Achieving programme goals

45. The degree to which UNDP had been effective in its programme varied across countries. Some ADRs indicated that UNDP had made significant contributions to development results and demonstrated positive results in most of the programme areas (Costa Rica, Brazil, Egypt, Liberia, Nepal and Moldova). Factors contributing to success included strong leadership in the country office management (including its ability to take calculated risks), committed staff, and programme planning that was based on an extensive situation and needs analysis. The contextualization of critical issues was particularly important in the Democratic Republic of the Congo where the conditions were so specific that there could be no blueprint approach to programme development. Close collaboration with government and other national stakeholders was another critical element. In the Pacific island countries, UNDP support in mainstreaming environment and climate change in national development strategies was instrumental in generating policy-level attention to environmental issues. The factors preventing the programme from fully achieving its expected results included, overly ambitious targets given the country's context, a secondary role for UNDP in the programme area where other development partners have assumed a more substantive role, and limited financial and human resources at the country office. In some countries, while UNDP provided effective policy and capacity development support, further support in the actual implementation of those policies and programmes would be needed for full development results to be achieved (Brazil, Moldova). This would require careful examination of specific conditions under which those policies and programmes are more likely to be implemented.

46. Having a well-defined, focused programme was highlighted as essential in ensuring UNDP effectiveness. Across the ADRs, UNDP was reminded of the need to take a thorough approach when developing a work plan, based on strategic analysis and consultation with stakeholders. In Egypt, the United Nations country team, together with the wider Development Partners Group, plus the Government, produced a common situation analysis in 2010 that identified country needs and provided the basis for strategy setting for development support, including under the UNDAF and country programme document. In Nepal, the ADR documented the country office's recent successful effort in formulating a strategic work programme by significantly reducing the number of projects and consolidating related projects into larger programmes, even while the country programme has been expanding rapidly.

C. Integration and promotion of gender, human rights and capacity development

47. UNDP was often regarded as well positioned to promote United Nations values, particularly on issues such as gender equality and human rights, and brought them to national debates and agendas. Several favourable findings were reported in the 2011 ADRs, including: integrating gender into UNDP programming rather than treating it as a stand-alone programme area (Nepal); conducting a joint gender programme with other United Nations organizations, such as UN Women, producing far-reaching results (Costa Rica, Egypt and Moldova); taking a comprehensive approach to address gender issues and support implementation through a Security Council resolution (Liberia); and the country office consistently and increasingly supporting programmes that actively promote equity, including gender and human rights (Djibouti). In other countries, the need for full integration of those issues into UNDP programme planning and implementation was stressed. Challenges included, for example, lack of a holistic strategy, narrowly focused activities, and a missing sense of urgency among government (Pacific island countries, Papua New Guinea). In Thailand, the ADR called for reaching out to citizens to raise awareness about

their rights and opportunities, extending UNDP advocacy beyond the policy-making circle. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Tunisia, promotion of human rights was somewhat overshadowed by their programme emphasis on technical aspects of anti-corruption and electoral support. Even on such technical aspects, UNDP encountered significant challenges in Tunisia before the revolution.

48. Evaluations indicated that UNDP contributed to developing the capacity of many individuals and institutions at local and central government, at the community level within civil society and within the country office (Liberia). In some countries, however, there was limited evidence that 'institutional' capacity would develop over time, since activities tended to be of one-off without a long-term strategy or a thorough institutional capacity assessment (Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nepal). Limited practices of sharing and transfer of knowledge and skills among trainees, as well as frequent departures of staff and officials, also pose a threat to the development of sustained institutional capacity. As many countries moved toward the national implementation modality, some ADRs also highlighted the need for more training and technical assistance to government partners (Djibouti and Nepal). In other countries where capacity constraints might become an issue, flexibility in adopting the national implementation modality was raised (Pacific island countries and Papua New Guinea). In Sri Lanka, the absence of capacity assessments and exit strategies hampered the appropriate transfer of functions to national institutions.

D. Improving programme and management efficiency

49. UNDP improved its programme and management efficiency in some countries where concrete steps were taken by the country office. Examples included the improvement in procurement and disbursement of funds by establishing a dedicated programme support unit (Liberia, Nepal and Papua New Guinea) as well as high programme delivery rates maintained throughout the review period despite the country's rapid programme expansion, owing to strong management leadership and timely programme response by staff (Moldova). Some country offices enhanced their monitoring and evaluation function by setting up field offices (Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nepal). In Nepal, UNDP established three field monitoring offices in the regions where most of its projects were located. Each office was headed by a field coordinator, who was tasked with conducting the monitoring of projects independently of programme and project staff. The country office monitoring and evaluation unit further evolved into a strategic management and development effectiveness unit, which provided analytical input to the office's strategic planning as well as the UNDAF process. The Thailand ADR called for stronger capacity for monitoring and evaluation not only in the country office but also among national implementing partners in order to improve results monitoring and reporting. In the United Arab Emirates, the ADR reported that UNDP needed to strengthen systems for programme management, for example, by establishing clear guidelines for accountability and reporting within the country office and with clients.

50. Efficiency remained a challenge in many countries, however, and included delays in procurement and payment disbursements, uneven progress in programme delivery and implementation, complex administrative procedures, and lack of communication with development partners on internal rules and regulations (Brazil, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Pacific island countries and Papua New Guinea). The 2011 ADRs included several post-conflict countries, where much of UNDP work focused on supporting the government with critical policy and strategy formulation, intensive capacity development, facilitating peace-building and reconstruction programmes, and providing specific technical support (for example, in disarmament, and demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in the Democratic Republic of the Congo). While UNDP was reported as having effectively complemented the government's work for transition, critical limitations for UNDP – including delays in responding to emerging issues, limited technical capacity of staff, and challenges in engaging fragile governments – also emerged, given often weak national institutions and capacities (Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia). In Djibouti, concerns over chronically limited human and financial resources at the country office were reported, where the role of UNDP included mobilization of resources to help the country serve as a strategic regional hub on peace in the Horn of Africa.

E. Ensuring more sustainability in development results

51. Limited sustainability in UNDP interventions was a recurring issue. ADRs indicated that sustainability of development results was often fragile and not ensured in many countries owing to factors including scarce resources by governments, donors and UNDP, and a thin spread of such resources; weak programme design and strategies; limited oversight and monitoring capability, particularly when projects were spread in a geographically diverse country; inherent constraints faced by the government; lack of synergies across and within progammes (for example, integration of gender, social inclusion and environment in all programme aspects), where efforts are made in isolation, limiting full programme potentials; and, in the case of conflict countries, challenges in securing government involvement in activities when the peace process and institutional development were incomplete. In Djibouti, the evaluation reported that the impressive establishment of the national statistical office could only be sustained if statisticians were continually trained and available, and local development initiatives would be successful if sustainable revenue sources were developed among local governments. In Brazil, UNDP was found underutilizing knowledge available through international networks.

52. The ADRs indicated that UNDP built solid partnerships with the government in many countries, often utilizing its unique, close access to central coordinating agencies (Costa Rica, Brazil, Egypt and Pacific island countries). The extent and depth of its partnerships with local authorities, international donors, civil society organizations and development partners, however, was reported as still being weak in many countries, limiting the opportunities for scaling up UNDP interventions as well as for promoting sustainable human development. In India, there was scope for greater engagement of UNDP with local development research centres, South-South exchange of scholars and experts, and other forms of partnership involving state/local administrations, non-governmental organizations and United Nations organizations, in order to strengthen knowledge and learning within UNDP, which in turn should be used for the benefit of immediate counterparts. Similarly in Sri Lanka, the ADR noted that national intellectual resources should be further exploited to enhance the policy support provided by UNDP and to strengthen national ownership of those policies. Favourable examples in partnerships were also documented in the 2011 ADRs. In Moldova, the significant support of UNDP to the Global Compact Network, which increased engagement of the private sector, contributed to success in the poverty reduction programme, in addition to its development partnership agreement made between the government and all development partners operating in the country. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is going through a fragile transition process, the strong partnership established with all development partners on the ground, including local governments, civil society, non-governmental organizations and United Nations organizations, was a critical factor in successfully developing a common roadmap for the country.

IV. Programme of work for the Evaluation Office for 2012-2013

53. The programme of work for the Evaluation Office is aligned with the UNDP strategic plan and approved by the Executive Board. The 2012 programme of work of the Evaluation Office is as follows and will be funded under the 2012-2013 biennial support budget approved by the Executive Board in its decision 2010/1 of 22 January 2010. A tentative programme of work for 2013 is also provided since planning for this work will need to begin in 2012.

A. Approved programme of work 2012

54. The following evaluations were included in the tentative programme of work approved by the Executive Board at its annual session in June 2011:

(a) Evaluation of the effectiveness of the UNDP strategic plan;

(b) Five evaluations of the regional programmes in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Arab States, Europe and the CIS, and Latin America and the Caribbean;

(c) Evaluation of the Global Programme;

(d) Evaluation of the South-South Programme; and

(e) Six ADRs.

55. The Evaluation Office will continue to support decentralized evaluation though managing a number of services and continuing to prepare and strengthen guidance:

(a) Managing the decentralized evaluations quality assessment system;

(b) Managing the roster of evaluation consultants;

(c) Managing the ERC; and

(d) Managing the evaluation space on Teamworks and developing evaluation knowledge products.

56. In addition, the Evaluation Office will continue to host and manage the secretariat of UNEG and contribute to the UNEG programme of work.

B. Proposed programme of work 2013

57. The tentative programme of work for 2013 is based on the Evaluation Office submission for the biennial budget:

(a) The second evaluation of gender mainstreaming in UNDP as a follow-up to the 2006 evaluation;

(b) Two thematic evaluations to be started in 2013 (themes to be determined in consultation with the Executive Board);

(c) Six ADRs (representing half of the country programmes that will be presented to the Executive Board in 2014);

(d) The Evaluation Office will also support the third International Conference on National Evaluation Capacities;

(e) In compliance with Executive Board decision 2010/16, the Evaluation Office will facilitate an independent review of the UNDP evaluation policy. Agreement has been reached with the Executive Board that the review will be completed in 2013 and be presented to the Executive Board in 2014; and

(f) The Evaluation Office will continue to support the evaluation function (as described in the approved programme of work for 2013) as well as the UNEG secretariat.